

Home Movie as Process:
Developing a Reading of the Moving Image in the Home Mode

By

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Abstract

The home movie remains an object of study far under-theorized and under-researched in the discipline of film and media studies, in part, because of the very nature of its unique qualities as a moving image produced and exhibited in the home mode. It is the goal of this thesis to develop a theoretical framework with which to appropriately approach a reading of the home movie in consideration of the contextual factors which surround, inform, and influence its interpretations. Specifically, it will be argued that the home movie should be read as a form of process. In developing this model, the thesis will initially proceed to define the notion of 'process' in terms of visual analysis, then apply this definition to the social practices of the home movie according to Richard Chalfen's concept of the 'home mode' of image-making and image-viewing. Finally, interactions involved in the process of the home movie will be explored through relative notions of aesthetics and memory as they apply to the experience of the home mode.

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Introduction

Within the discipline of film and media studies, the home movie remains an enigmatic orphan studied only in a select niche of scholarship. Despite being an increasingly ubiquitous part of the personal histories of families as amateur moviemaking technologies become more widely available and less expensive, the scholarship devoted to understanding the role of the home movie in building such histories is waiting to be explored further. Writing in 1986, filmmaker and author Fred Camper, in a special issue of the *Journal of Film and Video* centered around amateur cinema, notes, “The prominent place that the home movie has played in the lives of many families...[as] an important family event in itself, has surely had a cultural impact of major, but hitherto largely unexamined, proportions” (9). Writing in 2008, film scholar and historian Ryan Shand, in the archivist-oriented journal *The Moving Image*, states, “Theoretical consideration of amateur cinema has to be one of the most neglected aspects of film studies; ... the current gulf between data and theory needs to be narrowed” (37-38). In over twenty years of time between the publishing of these two articles, amateur films and home movies are still often found under the broad category of ‘orphan film’, encompassing a wide breadth of types and genres of moving images waiting to be unearthed and appreciated. Narrowing the focus, even within the term ‘amateur cinema’ there exists a plethora of unrelated modes of filmmaking and exhibition practices which are lumped together only due to sharing the common trait of being ‘not professional’. As a non-professional mode of filmmaking, home movies may become

conflated with other modes of amateur cinema simply by association, without properly defining what one particular type of amateur film actually is. This conflation of definition also leads to a conflation of approach in studying one type of media or another.

In the preface of his book *Representing Reality*, documentary film scholar Bill Nichols poses the problematic position of the documentary in relation to the study of the fictional feature film, stating, “All too frequently, the categories and criteria adopted for narrative film analysis are assumed to be readily transferable to documentary, with, perhaps some minor adjustments” (1991, *xi*). Similar notions may be said about the analysis of home movies, as well. In line with Nichols’ view of analyzing documentary, the analysis of home movies cannot necessarily be conducted in the same manner as feature films. Just as the documentary requires an alternative approach to study, so does the home movie. Being produced in a context with intended purposes far different from those of the feature film, and being viewed and consumed in entirely different modes of exhibition, the home movie necessitates an approach to study that must appropriately honor these differences. Home movies are not professional films screened for large, heterogeneous audiences, but are made and viewed amongst small groups of people situated within close social relationships. Scholarship centered around the home movie must account for these inherent differences.

Up to this point, the home movie has primarily remained an object of study in film history and communications practices. Two groundbreaking books in the scholarship of home movies are Patricia R. Zimmermann’s *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film*, published in 1995, and Richard Chalfen’s *Snapshot Versions of Life*, published in 1987. Zimmermann traces the history of the development of home movies and amateur films from

early stages in cinema based upon the popular discourses published about them. Chalfen, on the other hand, approaches home movies (and family photographs) from an ethnographic perspective, studying the practices surrounding families' uses of home media in development of his concept of the 'home mode'. More recently published books regarding home media include Michelle Citron's *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, published in 1999, and James M. Moran's *There's No Place Like Home Video*, published in 2002. The former focuses on the author's personal narratives regarding her family in an abstract approach to the home movies of her childhood, while the latter—situated in the study of video in the home mode—is primarily centered around theorizing the medium of video, itself. Apart from these books and a few select edited volumes, scholarship regarding home movies otherwise appears sparsely throughout academic journals. While scholars such as Zimmermann and Chalfen have continued to develop and greatly progress the position of the home movie in academic study in terms of its histories, purposes, and uses, what remains to be developed is an approach to *reading* the images of home movies.

At the most basic level, home movies serve the practical purpose of documenting the important family events and travels of people around the world. But beyond acting as a form of documentation, home movies also serve as images important to understanding relationships between selves and others. At a deeper level, these relationships are formed because home movies serve specific familial purposes and are often treated as realized, visualized forms of memory in which their creation comes in the formation of an image that captures a person, place, or object in a particular context with a set of aesthetics that may become characteristic of a nostalgic past. Functioning as such, home movies create a form of visual history, which, in turn,

plays a role in developing the relationships subjects have with one another and to the images of the home movie, itself, as time progresses and the images and subjects both age. The home movie is a part of the progression and making of meaning, thereby necessitating an examination of not only its place in history as approached by previous scholarship, but also an understanding of *how* it takes part in constructing meaning. As such, it is the goal of this thesis to develop a theoretical framework by which to approach a *reading* of the moving image in the home mode. Specifically, it will be argued that the home movie should be read as a form of *process* based upon the proximity of social relationships and intentions involved, the nature of its practices and contextual factors in the home mode of production and exhibition, and the construction of experience through aesthetics and memory as subject to time. In progressing the notion of home movie as process, the following chapters will each seek to theoretically outline aspects and interactions involved in the home movie which necessitate its unique position and approach as an object of study.

The first chapter will establish a definition of ‘process’ by which to work with. As a means of reading different from a ‘textual analysis’, the developing of this definition of process will also involve a discussion of the concept of ‘text’ according to Roland Barthes. This notion of text will be used to show how textual analysis differs from that of a method of ‘visual analysis’ according to Mieke Bal. The concept of visual analysis will be applied in appropriately defining process. Central to the delineation between text and process will be the proposed ‘proximity’ of subjectivity inherent to interpretive interactions. Proximity will be used to suggest a level of subjectivity in terms of relationship between the points in discussion, in which a ‘narrow’ proximity suggests a close, direct relationship and a ‘distant’ proximity will suggest an

indirect relationship which is *not* predicated on formally established social connections. This notion of proximity will be applied to participants involved in the social and interpretive activities associated with producing and viewing home movies and the relationships developed through such activities. While a specific mode of proximity is not necessary for a researcher to be a part of, reading the home movie as process requires the researcher to develop an appropriate understanding of the context comprising the proximity involved.

After establishing a working definition of process in the first chapter, the second chapter will explore the applicability of process to the home movie, discussing the home movie as a type of moving image situated in the functions and activities of Richard Chalfen's concept of the 'home mode'. The chapter will first discuss origins and intentions of the home movie according to Patricia Zimmermann and how these necessitate a reading of the home movie apart from professionally produced counterparts. Secondly, the chapter will discuss and apply Chalfen's ideas of the 'home mode' to the qualification of the home movie as process based upon the social practices and purposes involved, including the contextual factors of production and exhibition. Finally, the chapter will express the changing contexts of the home mode based upon applications of the concept by other scholars in more recent publications, then discuss how these changes also apply to the reading of home movie as process.

After developing the notion of home movie as process in the second chapter, the third chapter will seek to theoretically outline two modes of experience which interact in the progression of the process: aesthetics and memory. Aesthetics and aesthetic conditioning will be considered in terms of the research of Pierre Bourdieu, showing how aesthetics affect and inform the interactions involved in the home movie. Memory will be discussed in terms of Gilles

Deleuze's concept of the 'recollection-image' as it relates to cinema, describing how the organizing of perception takes part in constructing experience. Finally, these two concepts will be discussed together as they apply to experiencing the home movie, based upon proposed methods of remembering the home movie and mediating its interactions according to Roger Odin.

To conclude the notion of the home movie as process, the final section of this thesis will pull together the concepts of the previous three chapters, stating the connections to be found in developing the theoretical framework. In order to better understand how this framework may operate, questions will be raised as starting points to consider in approaching a reading of Robbins Barstow's 1956 home movie *Disneyland Dream*. Finally, since this is a thesis outlining a framework with which to further develop scholarship about the home movie, the conclusion will address future directions in research.

1. Visual Proximity: Text and Process

“...rereading is no longer consumption, but play (that play which is the return of the different). If then, a deliberate contradiction in terms, we immediately reread the text, it is in order to obtain, as though under the effect of a drug (that of recommencement, of difference), not the real text, but a plural text: the same and new” (Barthes 1974, 16).

In debating the reading of the home movie as either text or process, questions arise surrounding the notion of what a text or process is and how either may be used in appropriately analyzing such a form of moving image. Based upon the contextual factors of the production and exhibition of the home movie, ‘text’ may not be sufficient in reading the moving image because text carries with it implications of how to approach interactions involved. Roland Barthes, in the above quote taken from his essay *S/Z*, regarding the reading of Honoré de Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, approaches a literary text in terms of how a reader consumes and comes to both understand and interpret the text. Accordingly, the notion of “rereading” is not simply a matter of repeating the first reading of the text, but rather, creating a new text altogether; one which places the appropriation of the text in the mind of the reader experiencing it. This new text does not abandon the old, but instead, approaches the original “real” text in a dialectic manner which Barthes considers to be “plural”. Plurality positions the reader as a part of the creation of meaning in the reading of text. Thinking in terms of the literary text, however, does not necessarily translate directly—or appropriately—to the reading of any kind of moving image, despite situating film analysis as a form of ‘textual analysis’ in the discipline of film and media

studies. Although reading a moving image may be approached as some form of 'visual text', defining that visual text is problematic because of the weight carried with the notion of 'text'. An audiovisual material is not inherently 'literal' to the extent of Barthes' reading of *Sarrasine*. Rather, the interaction of the reader, or in this case viewer, with audiovisual material is an approach different from that of the literary text. As such, when considering the reading of a moving image, the approach to reading must be appropriate to the source material. More specifically, in reading the home movie, the approach must take into consideration the circumstances by which the source material was initially created because the home movie carries an intentionality specific to its practicality in the use of pre-existing social relationships (Shand 2008, 39). But before approaching the specific context of the moving image created in the home mode, the framework by which notions of 'text' and 'process' will be used and differentiated must first be defined.

Although the terms 'text' and 'process' may be taken at face value, describing these terms in relation to moving images requires a more thorough examination. Otherwise, assumptions of approach may be falsely taken for granted in analyzing the particular moving image of the home movie. The work of Barthes, as a formidable purveyor of approaches to textual analysis, will be further discussed through his notions of the "photographic message" (1977), considering what the 'text' of the image is and how it may be interpreted. Beyond the 'text', 'visual analysis' will be discussed in terms from cultural theorist Mieke Bal and how this relates to the notion of 'process' that will be used throughout the exploration of the reading of the home movie to follow.

Image and textual analysis

In his discussion of the roles of history and experience in the study of culture, Michael Pickering finds that analysis of culture is also an analysis of historical conditions (1997, 10), in which, “the past as it is constituted in historical knowledge is always an organized past” (6). As such, ignoring context in a reading or analysis may form a study much less complete since the present is influenced by or may result from events of the past. Pickering notes, however, that this attention to past will always create a “gap between ‘lived’ cultural experience and any attempt in history, biography, film or novel, to reconstruct...the texture of that experience across time” (32) since the accuracy of reaching into such histories is always subject to the negotiation of the present. What Pickering is calling for is not a constant documentation of the past as it influences the present in order to fill this “gap”, but rather, an understanding and consideration of the role of history in informing the reading of present experience. Similar to the aforementioned notion of “rereading” the text, there is a plurality in the analysis of culture which assumes not only a text, but also a context.

In accordance with the methods of reading text presented by Roland Barthes, the role of context becomes problematic because much of the consideration of context relies on the consideration of authorship. Forming a part of the history of a text, the author produces a text at a certain time in a certain place with a unique sociocultural background. Barthes famously declared the “death of the Author” (1977, 148) in textual analysis, noting, “to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (147). Suggesting this, he presents binary operations by which a text is produced and consumed, in which an authorial presence creates one reading or another, neither of which

involve the interpretation or “rereading” of a text by the reader who is consuming it. In declaring the death of the Author (capitalized in order to express authority over the text), Barthes seeks to remove the concept of text being understood in only one way. He states, “Linguistically, the [Author] is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a ‘subject’ not a ‘person’, and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language ‘hold together’...to exhaust it” (145). Here, Barthes suggests that it is the level of proximity between author and reader which, in part, determines a linguistic relationship void of meaning. Language, does not create a ‘person’, but instead, only a ‘subject’ that matters not outside of the realm of the text. The subject exists only for and in the text, and the author is but a fleeting instance of the subject. Considering this gap in proximity between author and reader, Barthes’ deduction considers the interpretation of text to be in the mind of the reader, while the author simply relays a “performance” (142). His theory, however, applies to the text of the (capitalized) *Author*, whose texts are reproduced, distributed, and consumed by readers that—similar to the linguistic relationship—exist in a distant, rather than narrow, proximity. Author and reader are isolated from each other in both context and text. To the distant reader, understanding the context of the Author may have no effect on the interpretation of the reading or rereading of the text. Hence for Barthes, the Author is dead. Although he discusses this primarily in terms of written literature, he also discusses the role of authorial presence in the interpretation of images, specifically photographs.

In determining the “photographic message”, Barthes outlines the orders of interpretation by which images may be read, delineating between the first order, or denotative, *qualities* of the image and the second order, or connotative, *messages* of the image (1977). When viewing

images, the denotative order of the image is comprised of its descriptive qualities, such as shapes, subjects, or colors in the frame, while the connotative order is the inferred interpretation, which is not necessarily immediately seizable because it is located at the level of the message, itself (18-19). Since the reading of the image is more than a literal description of the image, analysis of the image as text is slightly more complex than what Barthes presents regarding authorship and readership. He describes this complexity as the “photographic paradox” which relies on a “co-existence of two messages, the one without a code...and the other with a code” (19). Coding comes through the connotative qualities of the image, which, accordingly, may be “realized at the different levels of the production of the photograph” (20). How the image is framed, where the place of the photographic content is, who the subjects are, and many other qualities may encode the image to convey certain messages. This suggests a greater level of importance in the authorship of the image, yet the coding, similar to the writing of the text by the Author, acts in a way in which Barthes describes the production as a matter of “performance” (142). Regardless of authorship, Barthes considers the photograph to be an “object endowed with a structural autonomy” (15), suggesting that the photographic image is its own object apart from any other text or image, despite particular denotations and connotations. Barthes notes that a relationship of an image to an adjacent descriptive caption may “quicken” or direct the reading, but such a directed reading is a “rationalization” rather than a “realization” by the reader/viewer (25). *Realizing* the reading of the image is a means of analyzing the image. Such a reading, accordingly, “...depends on the reader’s ‘knowledge’ just as though it were a matter of a real language, intelligible only if one has learned the signs,” making the reading of the photograph “always historical” (28) in relation to the reader’s own sociocultural background

and values. The reading of the photographic message, for Barthes, is likened to the reading of the text in its dependency on interpretation by the reader. He thus determines the photographic message to be a “continuous message” (17), suggesting that interpretation of the image, similar to the reading and rereading of the text, is neither a stable nor static means by which images are understood.

Reading the image as text, however, must also assume the delineation between author and Author. Barthes’ discussion of the image is centered around the image of the press photograph and the codes that follow the practices of the press photograph, as created for publishing in a newspaper or magazine. Much like the literary novel, the press photograph finds intent in the production, distribution, and consumption of the image for a very broad number of viewers with many different sociocultural backgrounds. As such, the proximity between Author and viewer must be considered in how to approach the very notion of a ‘textual analysis’ of an image because the reading of text as described by Barthes implies a distant proximity. Isolated from each other, the context of the photographic Author—similar to that of the literary Author—may have no effect on the interpretation of the text by the reader since the reader is removed from the place and time of the Author, with no predisposition or development of direct social relationship. The mode of production and exhibition plays a role in the means by which images are read and understood because it correlates to the proximity of the origins and intentions between the producer and viewer. Distant proximity by textual analysis makes for a reading of an image different from that of a narrow proximity, and in turn, requires a different means of approaching analysis.

Visual analysis

Throughout many publications, cultural theorist Mieke Bal dissects methodologies of studying visuals and culture, advocating for interdisciplinary approaches to the study of concepts in order to better inform research in cultural and visual studies. With a focus on concepts, she approaches interdisciplinarity through the notion of the ‘traveling concept’, allowing for methodologies to be built across the humanities, in which concepts are “sites of debate, awareness of difference, and tentative exchange” (2003a, 34). Debate, difference, and exchange allow for a more holistic means of approaching objects or subjects of study by fleshing out the discourse involved. One such concept she discusses in detail is ‘visual analysis’, much of which is pertinent to the differentiation of reading as text or as process. Although textual analysis is appropriate for readings with distant proximity, as discussed prior, reading the particular moving image of the home movie requires a different means of approach since it is created by different means with inherently different intentions than those of the literary text or professionally produced image.

Discussing ‘text’, Bal notes that this concept, in its travels across the humanities, has “become dirty, come to imply too much, to resist too much; hence it has become liable to deepen the divide between the enthusiasts and the skeptics” (2009, 21). This resistance and implication carried with ‘text’ does not necessarily condemn text to forever be shunned in academic study, but rather, to be used more carefully. She notes that such resistance may be used advantageously in creating a greater discourse because it may produce controversy and thus regain analytical force (21). But despite this encouraging of text and textual analysis, Bal also cautions the use of text as it applies to image, noting, “Many fear that to speak of images as texts is to turn the image

into a piece of language” (21), thus creating another set of assumptions by which to resist. While the previous discussion of textual analysis approached this resistance, the following exploration of ‘visual analysis’ will seek to explore how this may appropriately apply to the notion of reading ‘process’.

Visual analysis, similar to textual analysis, is predicated on the notion of reading, but where it differs is in the *approach* to reading. Bal notes, “In short, visual analysis critically analyzes visible objects and events of seeing” (2008, 178), or in other words, visual analysis centers around the act of seeing. What is being seen is also of considerable mention. Here, Bal states that visual analysis pertains to seeing “visible objects”, yet this term may carry with it implications not unlike ‘text’. ‘Visual analysis’, accordingly, is short for ‘visual culture studies’, indicating the examination of ‘visual culture’ (168), stemming from backgrounds in art history, and seeking interdisciplinary development through the notion of ‘cultural studies’ (166). Since visual analysis is enacted through the development of cultural studies, the idea of ‘object’ is not necessarily the same as ‘text’; rather, object may be more expansive and inclusive depending on the parameters of the study. For Bal, the question is not about an object possessing “a visual dimension”, but instead, *how* the visual is deployed by or from the object (2000b, 492). The object is not necessarily a text, but a means by which expression is made. She states, “The object of visual analysis...is not a collection of things, but first of all an aspect of things, people, and moments: their visibility, and in the wake of that visibility, the aspects that flesh out their visibility” (2008, 170). ‘Visuality’, accordingly, is comprised of the visual qualities of the object, in which the aspects of its qualities are the points of meaning made by the readers of the object, and as such, require “an active act of looking” to be ‘visual’ (165). Visuality is a primary factor

to consider in the analysis of an object because, Bal notes, "...the point is not in [the] choice of objects...[but] in the questions we ask of those objects: questions of use, of affect...of power..." (168), and it is the visuality expressed by those objects that is "under examination, not a collection of visible things" (173). In the active act of looking at a visual object, the viewer is invested in the reading and interpreting of the visuality of the object (2003b, 13). As such, the 'object' of visual analysis—rather than 'text'—implies the qualities of visual expression which may be read by the viewer viewing the object. The focus of the study of visual analysis, in approaching the visuality of the object, shifts attention from the *sole interpretation* by the reader of the text to the *relationship* formed between the expression by the object and the reading by the reader.

Critically reading an object through visual analysis inherently differs from reading by textual analysis. As previously discussed, the relationship between reader and text suggests a relationship of distant proximity, creating an interpretation in one direction: by that of the reader. In shifting the reading from a textual analysis to that of a visual analysis, there is a change in this directionality. Bal states:

"The shift in methodology...is founded on a particular relationship between subject and object, one that is not predicated on a vertical and binary opposition between the two, [but instead,] the model for this relationship is interaction, as in 'interactivity'" (2009, 19-20).

Rather than maintain a binary between Author and reader as textual analysis suggests, Bal proposes that visual analysis be based upon interactivity. In creating an interactivity, the point of study shifts from interpretation to relationship. She notes, "Visuality as an object of study requires that we focus on the relationship between the seen and the seer" (2003b, 14), and this

focus allows for a more thorough understanding that considers a bi-directionality of reading rather than a binary opposition. In this relationship can be found more than a one-way interpretation, as Bal suggests, “Practitioners of visual analysis are keen to account for the affect-laden relationship between the thing seen and the subject doing the seeing” (2008, 168), noting that affect in the relationship may be an influence upon the critical understanding of what is taking place between reader and object, predicating visual analysis upon an interactivity that is subject to change throughout time.

In shifting the focus of study from the point of single interpretation to the point of ongoing relationship, questions arise in the relative application of visual analysis over textual analysis when considering the moving image. As a concept, Bal finds visual analysis—along with other concepts she discusses throughout her work—to be “tools of intersubjectivity” (2009, 14). Considering the analysis of the moving image, it is difficult to approach reading without invoking subjects outside of the field of film and media studies, since the discipline and its objects of study do not exist within a vacuum. Yet more specifically, each film is unique not only in textual properties, but also in contextual positions. Study of ‘media’ suggests an encompassing range of objects of study: from radio to television, to print and photographs, to countless other examples of media in a steady prevalence amongst academic study and daily life. With such a variety of media, the means by which to analyze and critically approach the many objects of study requires not one method, but many, since each mode of media is unique in its construction and consumption. While textual analysis carries with it assumptions regarding the positional gap between Author and reader, visual analysis offers a more open, interdisciplinary

approach which may be molded more appropriately to particular objects of study, including that of the home movie.

A home movie is far different from a professional film, not only in its aesthetics and production value, but also in its intentions, mode of production, and means of exhibition. It signifies a unique relationship with the viewer apart from that of the professional film. Conflating the means by which the home movie is read with those of the professional film may result in an analysis not thorough enough to appropriately approach the nuances of what makes a film a 'home movie'. As previously noted according to film scholar Ryan Shand, "Theoretical consideration of amateur cinema has to be one of the most neglected aspects of film studies" (2008, 37), and in order to better approach the moving image of the home movie, theory provides a means by which to read and understand the neglected material more thoroughly. In turn, Mieke Bal's notion of 'visual analysis' may be appropriately molded to reading the home movie as a form of 'process'.

Process

Through visual analysis, the focus of study relies on a model of the relationship between subject and object (Bal 2000b, 485). It is at this point of relationship from which 'process' will be drawn. Stemming from the point of relationship, a process in the discipline of moving image studies signifies the interactivity that occurs between the viewer and the visual with respect to time. As such, the interactivity of process also signifies continuous means of understanding and organizing the interactions involved in the relationship. Such organization is a part of a greater experience in which meaning is constructed. As Bal explains, "The idea of the 'real' thing

suppresses the constructed nature of ‘reality’. The ‘social life of things’ cannot be grasped by grasping an object” (2003b, 11). In other words, the ‘social life of things’ is a means of organizing society; the way in which subjects understand roles to one another and to the objects around them cannot be tangibly or physically grasped, but must be understood from one’s own perspectives and experiences. Interacting with objects—such as the moving image—becomes a part of the process in organizing and situating such understanding. As Bal suggests, constructing one’s own perception of what is ‘real’ may be more prevalent than how ‘reality’ may actually be constructed. Through perception, an interpretive relationship is created in which experience is both created and negotiated. In applying such negotiations to viewing a visual object, Bal explains, “Authenticating an interpretation because it is grounded in acts of seeing or, more strongly, in perceptible material properties, is a rhetorical use of materiality” (11). Material, including the visual object, is understood at the disposal of the one with whom it interacts, creating such a rhetoric by which experience may be subjectively negotiated or ‘authenticated’ as the interaction develops through time. In this developing subjectivity lies the difference between ‘text’ and ‘process’. While a ‘text’ may be read at a distant proximity through a single interpretation by a reader at one particular time, a ‘process’ is read at a narrow proximity through a development of interactivity subject to the progression of time. Building from Bal’s notion of ‘visual analysis’ and ‘object’, the central component to the making of meaning is the point of relationship, of interaction, of negotiation. From this point is drawn the notion of ‘process’ as a point of experience *continually* subject to a *narrow*, rather than distant, proximity which is predisposed by a *subjective*, rather than objective, relationship.

The home movie originates in the form of a process by its very nature. Predisposed by established social relationships, the home movie begins through subjectivity and provides a means to develop the relationships involved. In producing and viewing home movies, the participants involved both create and exhibit within a narrow proximity, based upon close social relationships of familialism or friendship, in which author and subject maintain a level of communication through the use of the home movie. As a process, the home movie must be understood from its origins and through the developments which affect its meanings throughout time as interactions and relationships are negotiated. Defining the home movie as a process, however, requires more than the aforementioned assumptions about the qualities of the home movie. The following chapter will seek to outline the contextual factors involved in the production and exhibition of the home movie which qualify it as a form of process.

2. Contextualizing the Home Mode: Production and Exhibition

“One question relevant to media studies is how members of a particular society understand, value, and criticize the pictures they make of themselves” (Chalfen 1986a, 58).

Estimations of the quantity of film productions made throughout the history of cinema figure that there have been far greater amounts of home movies produced than of any other type of film (Camper 1986, 9), yet qualifying such quantities remains to be seen. Of course, gathering precise numbers of the ratio of home movies to other types of films that have been produced becomes equally, if not more, problematic than building a ‘complete’ history of any aspect of cinema, especially in consideration of preservation practices prior to the formal establishment of film archives. Archivist Paolo Cherchi Usai estimates that more than eighty percent of silent cinema production from around the world has been lost (2000, 10), and imploring such an estimate of home movies that have fallen subject to deterioration, decomposition, or simply being disposed of because of a perceived ‘lack of value’ may prove equally shocking. Quantifying the production and preservation of home movies becomes more difficult without a centralized mode of production, such as a studio; or records of exhibition, such as national cinema chains. Perhaps the quantification of home movie productions would require a tabulation of sales of equipment and media from companies such as Kodak or Bell and Howell, or from companies producing newer home video technologies such as Sony or JVC. Yet even with such tabulations, the quantifying of sales of ‘amateur’ media and equipment would not necessarily

reveal how such media were actually being used, by whom, or with what intentions. Many uses of 'amateur' equipment may not necessarily be used toward the production of a 'home movie'. Quantifying home movies continues to be a difficult task. Of the remaining quantity of home movies currently in existence, qualifying such films becomes difficult because the very term 'home movie', as well as the practices surrounding it, have often become conflated as a means of noting stereotypically 'naive' modes of production and exhibition within a familial setting.

In the above quote from anthropologist and communications scholar Richard Chalfen, the notion of the use of image-making and image-consumption within particular sociocultural groups is placed into question. Throughout much of his career, his focus of study has been centered around the uses of images within the sociocultural structure of the family, describing the social and cultural practices of and surrounding image-making and image-consumption as forms of practices in the 'home mode'. Examining the practices of the 'home mode' allows for an approach to qualify the uses and meanings of the 'home movie' as such a form of home mode image production and exhibition. Of note, Chalfen's question is centered around "the pictures [people] make of themselves". The very reflexive nature of home mode imagery is key to the nature of the home movie qualifying as a form of process. The home movie, as a moving image produced and exhibited in the home mode, necessitates a particular and appropriate means of reading and understanding because the reading of home movies as forms of text does not necessarily encompass the contextual factors which, in turn, qualify the home movie as process. The reflexivity of turning an image to oneself and others in close proximity carries with it implications which delineate further the act of home mode imagery from that of interactions with

any other visual objects. In the unique production and exhibition practices involved in the activity of the home movie is a particular mode of experience.

As a central component to the notion of process, experience must be considered in specific terms of the home movie, as well as its correlation to the proximity between subject(s) and author(s) in accordance with the relationships communicated through the medium. This chapter seeks to examine the contextual factors of the home mode which qualify the home movie as a form of process, approaching the production and exhibition practices involved. Delineating the home movie from the notion of text, the chapter will first explore the qualities of film which separate ‘amateur’ from ‘professional’ according to film scholar Patricia R. Zimmermann. Secondly, the chapter will apply the context of the home movie to the production and exhibition practices of the ‘home mode’ as defined by Richard Chalfen. Finally, the chapter will examine the changing contexts of the home mode and the applicabilities of these changes to the home movie.

Amateur and professional

Films produced and exhibited professionally by major studios differ greatly from amateur films made by individuals and groups not only in terms of production value, but also in origins and purposes. Differentiating between the two allows for a delineation between the concepts of text and process as applicable to the reading of the home movie because there are inherent differences in how amateur and professional films are meant to be consumed. Patricia Zimmermann, throughout her studies of amateur film, traces the differences between amateur and professional film practices from a history of technological, economic, and discursive

relationships that have systematically codified filmmaking to fall into categories of either one or the other. In this history, she progresses the notion of ‘familialism’ as a form of social practice central to the home movie (1988). By inscribing the home movie with familial social practices, Zimmermann’s work helps to realize how the production and exhibition of home movies functions as a social activity, in and of itself, and is coded separately from that of the professional film. But before discussing this social activity, the historical traces Zimmermann uses to reach the description of social activity will inform the differentiations of the professional film text and the amateur home movie process.

Detailing the developmental history of amateur film, Zimmermann finds technology and economics to be the initial defining elements of amateur and professional types of film until 1923 (1995, 12). Rather than the differentiation developing out of purely social, aesthetic, or political relations (12), amateurism in film was defined based upon the type of market it fulfilled. Zimmermann states:

“From 1897 to 1923, amateur film was differentiated from professional film...to protect the film manufacturing monopolies of Eastman Kodak and Edison. ...35mm film, the stock manufactured by Kodak, was considered to be for use by the professional, while the diverse multitude of nonstandard gauges, sprocket design, and alternative moving picture apparatuses produced by entrepreneurial inventors and hobbyists were lumped together as equipment for the amateur” (1988, 24).

From the onset of sales of cinematic equipment, there is a differentiation in the intentions of the technology, itself. Raising 35mm stock to a level of status above all other nonstandard gauges appropriated the ways in which the film was meant to be used. While nonstandard gauges remained tools amongst consumers, 35mm stock was marketed to the professional. The

development of the technology functioned as a means of differentiating the economic markets for both the producers and consumers of film technology (1995, 14), thus delineating how the types of films should function, who should be using them, and who could have access to them.

Zimmermann traces a shift in this logic of opposition to 1923, with the standardization of 16mm as *the* amateur film gauge according to marketing campaigns from Bell and Howell and Eastman Kodak, both manufacturers of the appropriate camera equipment and film stock, respectively. Describing this as an assurance of oligopoly, Zimmermann notes, “With the standardization of 16mm, amateur film transformed from an entrepreneurial battleground for competing patents into a consumer commodity aimed at families and copying Hollywood narrative forms” (2008b, 279). Notably, amateur film was never meant to operate in the same way as professional film. Amateur film could emulate its professional counterpart, yet the standardization of amateur equipment cemented the intended uses of the gauge of the medium. Film historian Haidee Wasson notes that the 16mm standard offered a “system alternative to the dominant commercial, theatrical model” for consumers not in the Hollywood industry (2009, 1). As a subordinate alternative, amateur film was subject to the system it functioned outside of, yet it did not necessarily parallel the history of professional film. Zimmermann finds professionalism to be a “region of technical control, rationality, and expertise,” while amateurism is a “territory of freedom, spontaneity, individualism, and aesthetic invention” (1986, 81). Although technological standardization continued throughout the history of amateur film—as shown by the “Lower-priced 8mm cameras, reintroduced by both Kodak and Bell and Howell in 1952...[developing 8mm] into the new substandard gauge for families” (1995, 117)—

Zimmermann finds such technological (and economic) standardizations to make way for the defining of amateur film through discourses of aesthetic and familial criteria (1988, 24).

In constructing conventions by which to achieve certain desired aesthetic styles, popular discourse directed toward amateur filmmakers promoted practices not only in filmmaking technique, but also in social practice. Zimmermann describes these mass-market magazines from the 1950s to be significant because they suggest that the “definition of amateur film on the discursive level moved toward entrenching [amateur] technology within both consumption and the bourgeois nuclear family” (1988, 25). As such, the discourse prescribed a “purer” observation through naturalness rather than acting on film (1995, 69), and in turn, emphasized action as a crucial part of creating a “family memory” (67). Following the standardization of technology, the focus of this discourse shifted away from cinematic production value toward the creation of an ideal image of the nuclear family. Zimmermann credits this to changes at both the professional and amateur levels of filmmaking, noting, “Hollywood positioned hand-held shooting as an advanced...expression of its technical prowess. In the 1950s the position, function, and definition of amateur film shifted from aesthetics and technology into a social configuration [of] nuclear-family ideologies” (111). Out of popular discourse rose the push for amateur production to take on roles of social practice, and in favoring the *social functions* of amateur family filmmaking over the concerns of *aesthetic production value*, the promotional discourses of the 1950s shifted toward a discussion specifically directed at the home movie. Zimmermann states, “‘Togetherness’ situated amateur filmmaking as ‘home movies’” (113), thus domesticating practices through prescription of the concept of ‘familialism’ and social interaction, displacing any possible distinctions between the discursive notions of ‘amateur film’

and 'home movie' (132). In the emergent trend toward images of familialism in home movies can be found the applicability and appropriation of the proximity of origins and intentions in regard to the home movie as a process.

The home movie, as being distinguished through its social functions, embodies familialism within the structure of the nuclear family. Zimmermann states, "...home movie practice flourished as a family activity rather than as an individual or collective pursuit,... [turning] togetherness, family, harmony, children, and travel into a performance of familialism" (1988, 30). In capturing such performances, the filmed images become a form of "visual elaboration of familialism...contributing to the privatization of amateur film" (30). In other words, the activity of the home movie becomes a private activity centered around the construction (or reinforcement) of home, situating participants as social actors, seeking to develop further their previously established relationships. Detailing the role of familialism, Zimmermann states:

"The aesthetic controls exerted over amateur film production in the 1950s exhibited a trend to concentrate amateur film usage on the leisure activities of the nuclear family, thus inscribing the ideology of familialism on amateur practice as an inconsequential hobby within the private sphere and simultaneously positioning it as a chronicler of the home" (39).

As a practice "within the private sphere", the function of familialism in creating the home movie assumes a proximity far narrower than that of the professional film. Building upon familial relationships, the extension of the home movie into the "leisure activities of the nuclear family" suggests that the home movie becomes implicated not only in the means of recreation, but in the experience of the moment, itself. In developing as a form of process which will be viewed and

negotiated at a time later than its production, the home movie acts within the private space as a signifier of a social practice during a particular time at a particular place. Here, the notion of private, as opposed to public, space divides further the differentiations between amateur and professional as it inscribes a narrow proximity between the subjects involved in producing and viewing the home movie. Private space, as suggested by cultural theorist Charles Taylor, heightens the “sense [of] signification in human life” (2007, 101). Applying this concept to Zimmermann’s notion of the private sphere as a space for familial activity, the practice of the home movie, itself, becomes a part of the signification of the event. The circumstances surrounding the filming, who was involved, and why the camera was present and rolling become a part of the context by which the home movie is to be viewed, re-viewed, and understood by the participants involved. This viewing characterizes the ‘nontheatrical’ film experience apart from the ‘theatrical’ one (Streible, Roepke, and Mebold 2007, 341), thus differentiating the modes of amateur and professional filmmaking and viewing.

In differentiating between the two modes, Zimmermann traces divisions between amateur and professional film beginning with technology and economics, then developing through emerging trends in social practice. Although her claims about the nature of amateur film are largely based upon popular discourse and literature *about* the amateur film rather than *recorded accounts* of familial productions or viewing experiences, what is revealed through her research is the different nature inherent to the two types of films present from their very beginnings. In contextual consideration, the professional film developed out of a mode of dominance, while the amateur film (and eventually home movie) was left in a mode of subordination to the professional film. The purposes of the two differ greatly. In developing through a discourse far

different from that of the professional film, the home movie sports an image of an ideal nuclear family rather than technological superiority. Although the reality of the relationships of the family may not be as ideal as they come to be represented through the home movie, the inscription of the home movie as a form of social activity predicated upon a level of familialism or close social relationship inscribes it with origins and intentions of a narrow, rather than distant proximity. As such, the home movie becomes implicated in the larger narrative of a family history developed in time. Through Zimmermann's delineations between the professional and amateur film, the notion of process as applied to the home movie begins to become apparent in the aforementioned contextual differences. Since the two were never meant to function simply as the same types of films with but a difference of scale, they cannot necessarily be read or understood in the same manner. To develop further the notion of the home movie as process, however, requires not only a perspective of the home movie as a form of difference, but also an understanding of the practices of and surrounding the home movie, itself. In exploring this, Richard Chalfen's notion of practices in the 'home mode' will be examined as they apply to the home movie, with specific attention to the contextual factors of the practices of production and exhibition.

Practices of the home mode

Studying family photographs and home movies from anthropological and communications-oriented perspectives, Richard Chalfen takes an ethnographic approach to describing and cataloging his concept of 'home mode' image-making and image-viewing. Conducting his studies of family photographic inventories and personal interviews in the 1980s,

his concept of the home mode has since disseminated outside of the disciplines of the social sciences and has been adopted and adapted by scholars in the humanities from the 1980s to the present. Chalfen's concept has remained a part of the discourse of home movies and family photography because it is not reliant upon interactions with specific technologies, but instead, is focused on the social practices surrounding the use of technologies and the meaningfulness of the images produced and consumed. The end of this chapter will explore the changing contexts of the home mode in more recent scholarship, while the following section will seek to outline the main structures underlying the home mode and its applicability to the notion of the home movie as process.

Discussing images in the home mode, Chalfen notes that the value of such images stems from an "important relationship, specifically between picture content and meanings that family members bring to their images (or have supplied by relatives and/or friends). That is, viewers already have some contextual knowledge about what they are viewing" (2002, 142). Despite whether or not this contextual knowledge comes from first-hand experience or second-hand communication, what is important for the reading of images in the home mode is the necessary context surrounding the image and the relationship that develops between image and viewer through a mediation of the image and context. Chalfen places much of the emphasis in defining the home mode through the contexts of production and exhibition rather than simply within the content of the image. In comparing the social practices of the consumption of media at levels of both home media and mass media, Chalfen states, "Of primary importance are (1) relationships between producers and consumers of various media, and (2) the social organization of intended audiences of the two" (143). Although relationships may form between consumers and

producers at both the professional or amateur levels, the means by which a relationship is organized and the intentions of its actions differentiate *how* the relationship is formed and later developed, and what the relationship *means* to the consumer through specific modes of communication.

Outlining modes of communication, Chalfen draws upon the work of visual communication scholar Sol Worth, defining ‘communication’ as “a social process within a specific context, in which signs are produced and transmitted, perceived, and treated as messages from which meaning can be inferred” (1987, 8). Communication is central to the concept of the ‘home mode’ as Chalfen describes it, notably because different modes of communication inform different types of relationships. Such ‘modes’ of media, for Chalfen, allow images to act as “symbolic forms, into the process of social communication”, in which “social” should be emphasized because of the “importance of shared knowledge and related patterns of appropriate behavior” when examining imagery specifically in the social activity of the home mode (8). At the very basic level, the ‘home mode’, accordingly, is described as “a pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centered around the home” (8). As a particular mode of communication, the home mode requires the contextual attributes of the private space of the home. This space is private, specifically, because mass modes of communication are distinguished from those of personal communication through intentionality and symbolic form. Chalfen notes, “Mass modes [of communication] include transient messages that have been produced through public symbol systems for mass distribution to large, heterogeneous, anonymous audiences” (8), thereby operating as modes of communication seeking an unattributed, impersonal form of interactivity; whereas the home mode functions at the personal

level through predicated social relationships of narrow proximity. Modes of communication are not necessarily exclusive to one form of media or another, but in the discussion of the development of the home mode, Chalfen focuses on the home movie.

Chalfen asserts that the home movie functions in “specific communicative contexts” (1986b, 104), particularly, the context of the private home. As a visual form of communication in the home mode, the home movie carries with it personal qualities. In such personal qualities can be found social and cultural characteristics which inform the relationships people develop through home movie images. Chalfen states:

“[The home movie] is *personal* and idiosyncratic in that one person made the movie, following a personal set of choices regarding who to put in the movie, where and when to shoot it, how long it should be, who it was meant for, and similar decisions. But this type of visual report is also *social* in the sense that many of the filmmaking decisions are shared with and understood by other members of society in informal, unwritten, and unofficially “correct” ways. In addition we understand these reports to be *cultural* in the sense that a moviemaker has followed or used a type of knowledge...of appropriate and expected behavior... In these ways, home moviemaking lets people demonstrate how they exist and operate *both* as individuals and as culturally conforming members of society” (104).

To suggest that the private practice of home moviemaking functions not only as an assertion of personal qualities but also of social and cultural belonging, inscribes the home movie, itself, as a means by which relationships are developed. Beyond a level of visual communication that informs relationships, the home movie may act as a mediation of relationships, or what Chalfen describes as an ongoing means of “socialization” (107). Through the activity of the home movie, in both its production and exhibition, relationships between the participants involved both on and

off camera are revisited and renegotiated in time. Through negotiations and renegotiations, participants develop socially in the activity of the home movie. In turn, the represented images that comprise the movie become involved in the making of meaning.

Drawing upon his research interviews, Chalfen notes, “Home moviemakers...stress the use of filmmaking technology to record, document, and *reproduce* a reality” (57). What that reality *is* may be skewed from actual reality, yet this does not stop the negotiation of meaning to be found in the images of the home movie. The moving images may take on a role apart from that of reality in organizing the represented perspectives, as similarly mentioned in the previous chapter regarding Mieke Bal’s notion of the ‘real’ constructing a ‘reality’ other than the ‘social life of things’ (2003b, 11). The home movie acts as a means to organize the reality of a participant’s social relationships. Regarding such organization, Chalfen states, “...home mode imagery reveals only a version of reality, one based on how people choose to look at a specific spectrum of their lives with cameras, and secondly, how they chose to present themselves” (1987, 135). Rather than necessitating a ‘truth’ in organization, Chalfen sees images in the home mode to act “[not as] statements of reality, but of interpretations of reality” (135). In deciphering interpretations (or rather, constructing and reconstructing interpretations), Chalfen finds meaning in home movies to “‘come across’ less ‘in the movie’ than in subtle recognition and tacit understanding that have been consensually agreed to by home mode participants” (1986a, 60). Participants become a part of the means by which meaning is made because the established relationships between them predispose the producing and viewing of the home movie. Furthermore, these participants are the ones who negotiate and renegotiate the interpretations of the moving image. Involved in the activity of producing the home mode is the

context provided by the participants, necessitating predisposed social relationships in the making of meaning. In providing context, the participants of the home mode take part in forming practices by which moving images are both produced and exhibited in the activity of home moviemaking.

Practices of production in the home mode inform the notion of narrow proximity when considering the origins and intentions of home movies. Throughout his research, Chalfen finds that many of the practices of production take place in decisions made while filming. Although he believes *planning* does not consciously occur *before* any filming begins (1987, 52), this does not mean that the production of home movies goes without decision-making *during* filming. Regarding such decisions, Chalfen states, “People are in charge of deciding when to take pictures, where to place the camera, how to hold it, and the [time] of exposure. ...*both* behavior behind the camera *and* in front of the camera [shows] each person playing a role and taking a responsibility for ‘doing it right’” (1991, 7). From the onset of production in the home mode, the participants involved assume particular methods of representing themselves and others. As suggested by Chalfen, the participants responsible for framing the picture decide how to present their subjects, and likewise, the participants in front of the camera behave accordingly in producing this representation of themselves. The notion of ‘doing it right’ for such representations is not unlike Patricia Zimmermann’s suggestion of the creation of an ideal family image. Inscribing the home mode of image-making with the idea of making the ‘right’ image suggests the intentions of how the images are meant to be viewed by the participants at a later time. Chalfen writes, “...these images have been created with the purpose and intention of implying significance to what is shown, and of satisfying certain expectations of people who will

view the pictures at a later time” (1987, 126). This does not necessarily mean that production of images in the home mode inherently seeks an ‘ideal’ image, but does suggest that the image is created out of a projected foresight. Therefore, images produced in the home mode are “*not* accidents” (125), but rather, constructed representations intended to negotiate the ways in which participants recall the past and develop their relationships in the present and future, primarily in search of the ‘right’ image to represent this past relationship. Through production, Chalfen notes, “...home moviemaking comprises activities that people prefer to do together...as a social activity in which experiences are shared [and] isolation...is not conducive to [the] underlying social functions of the home mode process” (55). The practice of production is a social interaction, and the representation of relationships through moving images seeks to develop further these social interactions. Important to the reading of home movies is the interpretation of how these social interactions took part in constructing the images; it is not only a matter of viewing the subjects within the frame of the moving image, but also a consideration of who took part in framing (and perhaps posing) the image. In the practice of home movie production, decisions are made on both sides of the camera which influence the social dynamics of the participants involved. Although the construction of the *representation* may end at the point of production, construction through *interpretation* continues in the exhibition practices of the home mode.

From the origins of the home movie, there is a narrow proximity in the social relationships between the participants responsible for constructing a desired representation of themselves. Similarly, there is a narrow proximity in the intended audience because the viewers of home movies are often involved with or socially close to the authors of the images. Viewing

images, Chalfen finds, is an activity that seeks “a review and re-appreciation of old information...[in which home mode participants pay] homage to their culturally structured perspective on life, their cultural identity, and their sense of membership and belonging” (1986a, 61). Viewing in the home mode acts as a reaffirmation of social position, as well as a renegotiation of said position. Exhibition offers a means by which the process of the home movie develops its continuation of negotiating the experience of the home mode. Through exhibition practices, Chalfen notes, “Clearly different kinds of emotions are stimulated, experienced, and encouraged to emerge in different ways in different viewing contexts” (61). Contexts of viewing are not only dependent on knowledge of social relationships, but also the contextual information of the mode of exhibition, itself, including the viewing location, method or apparatus of image projection or reproduction, fellow participants involved, and the impromptu narratives stimulated by the images. Chalfen notes that the home mode involves a private selection of audience (1987, 8), and in most cases he investigated found that the select audiences typically viewed home movies “in a living room, a den, or a recreation room of a private home [accommodating] a relatively small number of people” (64). The private space of the home offers a more comfortable, intimate setting apart from that of a public space. Involving a select audience—often consisting of participants being viewed on screen—accordingly creates a form of social setting that is similar to the one which originally inspired the production of the movie (57). Exhibition in the home mode becomes a social activity of reception and renegotiation of social relationships in the private space in which the experience of viewing the home movie becomes another point of construction of meaning. In examining ways of interpretation, Chalfen writes, “Identification and relationship of the viewer to the imagery are

important at every turn. Outsiders do not have the types of information needed and expected to make appropriate home mode interpretations of ‘what’s going on’” (123). This statement points out the necessity for context in constructing the viewing experience in the home mode. Without a contextual understanding, the moving images remain unfamiliar and meaningless. However, sharing a common context does not inherently create a similar interpretation scheme amongst participants as they experience viewing throughout time. Chalfen states, “Nor should we assume that individual viewers will hold a fixed set of meaning through time. While dimensions of a particular interpretive strategy remain stable, details of meaning construction may change” (122). In turn, the participant involved in viewing may approach a particular home movie with a “stable” communication and interpretive strategy, yet the meaning made out of such interpretations will not necessarily remain stabilized throughout time. In the practice of exhibition, the signification which participants create through home movies remains in flux. Although requiring a set of contextual information to construct interpretation, what is interpreted at the level of exhibition continues to negotiate and alter the experience of the home mode.

The home mode extends beyond the notion of a particular space and into a mode of communication and interpersonal interactions. It consists of sets of social activities involving participants in narrow proximities of social relationships through practices of production and exhibition by which meaning may be continually constructed and negotiated. Though Chalfen’s concept of the home mode is being used here as a means to reach the applicability of ‘process’ in terms of the home movie, the changing contexts of the concept through interpretations of other scholars also inform the ways in which the home mode of communication attains a means of process.

Changing contexts

Discussing the home mode in terms of video production, media scholar Maria Pini extends Chalfen's concept into an examination of video practices in the home. Similar to Chalfen, she suggests that the home mode is distinguished through a set of codes and practices that follow a home-oriented intentionality of production (2009, 71). Beyond this, Pini molds the home mode into a concept responsible for constructing a family identity. She sees video-making in the home mode to reinforce particular family ideologies (72) through the relating of filmic representations to means of negotiating reality in the form of a familial narrative. Pini states, "Home video production can...be viewed as an always-in-process bringing into being of a particular 'story'...as one of the many always-in-process operations involved in constructing a sense of identity and of one's place in time and space" (91). The home mode, therefore, is responsible for creating a narrative process in which Pini suggests represented family ideology may take precedence over actual family relationship. The home mode acts in reinforcing such stories. In turn, Pini's concept of the home mode realizes an interpretation and favoring of idealism through home video practices.

Also studying the home mode in terms of video practices is media scholar James Moran, yet his interpretation does not view the home mode to inherently reinforce positive social relationships. He states, "While parents may intend their home movies and videos to signify togetherness and happiness, their children may contest or resist these messages by interpreting them from...different perspectives...[thus] preventing a uniform or functionalist fit between family members, home mode practice, and the social order" (53). Although Moran narrowly

assumes Chalfen's concept of home mode to only function in uniformity, what is revealing about Moran's interpretation of the home mode is its means of resistance. One function of the home mode, he believes, is "to provide a material articulation of generational continuity over time" (60), which could arguably be considered as a means of generational *discontinuity*, as well. Much of Moran's focus is on the distinguishing differences between home movie *filmmaking* and home movie *video*-making based upon the different physical and technological qualities of the substrates and apparatuses of the two media. In turn, this difference in technology acts as a marker in the differences to generational approaches to how movies in the home mode are utilized by participants, offering means not only of social activity, but reactivity, as well.

Finally, another alternative interpretation of the home mode according to film scholar and historian Ryan Shand seeks to move the home mode beyond the home. Shand upholds many of Chalfen's views on the home mode, but suggests that the term 'community mode' may be more suitable than 'home mode' (2008, 57). Noting throughout his article that amateur cinema remains under-theorized, Shand believes, "...the home mode is not a *genre* of amateur cultural production, but rather an *exhibition space* where self produced materials are shown to the intended audience of family and close friends" (39). Although what has been argued in the previous section also includes production space in the home mode, what is insightful about Shand's comment is the favoring of exhibition in creating a mode of community communication. While Chalfen only suggests 'community' by not specifying the terms of a 'social relationship', Shand is more explicit in showing how the involvement of close social relationships outside of the family may construct a space beyond the familial. Shand adapts Chalfen's concept to fit observed practices.

Through these three adaptations and interpretations of Chalfen's concept of the home mode, the differing approaches reveal an attribute central to the function of the home mode: development through time and context. Pini suggests the home mode to be a reinforcement of social relationship, while Moran finds a capable resistance and Shand seeks to extend the concept of the home to the community. The concept of the home mode offers a framework that suggests a means of social interaction and interpersonal communication in development with the participants involved as their interactions with each other and their home media change throughout time. Rather than situate the concept in a fixed context, the home mode is contextually malleable for appropriate study of image-making and image-viewing within and amongst particular sociocultural relationships. As such, the home movie—a moving image situated in the home mode of visual communication—operates as a process based upon its purposes and uses in the home mode.

Tracing a history of technological, commercial, and social differences between professional and amateur film, Patricia Zimmermann's research reveals a dichotomy separating how the two types of film were meant to be used and who was meant to be using them. In differentiating between the two, the separate purposes suggest that they cannot be understood within the very same framework because they are neither created nor viewed in the same contexts. While the professional film has remained the primary focus of film studies, the home movie requires an altogether different approach in order to sufficiently and appropriately encompass the context by which it is produced and exhibited. Utilizing Richard Chalfen's concept of the home mode allows for an approach for situating the home movie appropriately in

the reading of process as described in the chapter prior. Process requires a level of context with which to read the moving image. Regarding context, Chalfen claims:

“Knowledge of social and cultural contexts provides a basis for interpreting how home mode imagery “means” a world, constructs a reality for part-time participations, and functions as part of a symbolic environment. Establishing patterns of these relationships should increase our sensitivity to interpreting the significance of other genres and modes of pictorial communications used in contemporary times as well as examples used by people in different spatial and temporal contexts” (1987, 168).

Context provides a means by which meaning is made and interpretations are constructed. Practices of production and exhibition in the home mode create a narrow proximity of contextual information between participants and home movies, allowing the home movie to function as an experience in which social relationships are continually making “meaning” through a constructed version of reality. A ‘process’, as a point of experience continually subject to a narrow social proximity predisposed by a subjective relationship, fits the reading of the home movie because the home movie is, itself, an experience produced and exhibited in a private space drawn by a close proximity of social relationships. As a moving image in the home mode, the home movie not only originates in said space among the involved participants, but it is also intended to be viewed by these participants as a means of re-appropriating interpretations in the social constructions between them. Reading the home movie is not only a matter of studying the content within the frame, but also a consideration of the context surrounding the production of that content and the ways in which the content is exhibited and interpreted at a later time. In order to better grasp the concept of the home movie as process, the following chapter will

explore the experience of the home movie in terms of aesthetics and memory as contextual factors which inform the interpretation of the home mode.

3. Experiencing the Home Movie: Aesthetics and Memory

“Instead of just recording reality, photographs have become the norm for the way things appear to us, thereby changing the very idea of reality, and of realism” (Sontag 1977, 87).

Within a single still frame of a home movie, a great amount information may be transferred both in terms of the content of the frame and the context surrounding it. Time, place, event, relationship, or emotion are just a sample of the expressions which the moving image in the home mode is capable of conveying, as well as mediating. In building a personal narrative through home movies and family photographs, there is a reliance upon the appearances of the images in how interpretations are made and understood, with such images often doubling and developing—in some form—as a characteristic of a nostalgic past in which the image becomes a signifier to a particular moment in the life of a relative or friend. Susan Sontag, in the above quote, suggests that images play an even larger role in the construction of a personal narrative. Beyond the use of images as signifiers, Sontag sees images to be the primary mode through which people see the world, suggesting that the image takes on greater importance than any notion of the ‘actual’ event, thereby favoring the image over ‘reality’ in the development of the understanding of self and others. In becoming the “norm for the way things appear” images actively partake in an aesthetic conditioning which mediates not only the ways images are read and understood, but also the relationships attributed to images. Considering this in terms of the home movie, the moving images, themselves, offer a means by which to enter into personal

narratives in the home mode, while also creating a set of tacit instructions that inform the understanding of said narratives. In turn, the aesthetics of the home movie may become the “very idea of reality” for the familial past.

Moving images in the home mode have the capability of standing in as signifiers of ‘actual’ events. While an actual event of the past can never be revisited or re-experienced, a home movie offers a means to approach that experience despite a disassociation and discontinuity of time (and possibly place). Discussing the inscription of ideologies in images, documentary film scholar Bill Nichols states, “An image is not what it represents, for in making its reference present again it does so despite the referent’s absence, its actual location elsewhere” (1981, 43). In absence of the original referent, the image signifies what the referent cannot because the referent cannot be revisited. Nichols continues, “...for [this difference between referent and image] signals a shift in code(s) or frame of reference needed to understand what the message is about” (43). The disassociation between the original referent and the represented image acts in conjunction with how the image is to be read. Understanding “what the message is about” is an understanding of what is being communicated, and the “frame of reference” is the tacit instruction upon which understanding is built. The image signifies, while the viewer interprets the signification. As Nichols suggests, “To represent with images is to symbolize, and symbolization is basic to intercommunications” (1). For the home movie, signification at the level of the image mediates what is being communicated and the codes by which such communications are understood influence the meaning that is constructed through the images.

The home movie, as a type of moving image, does not escape the inscriptions of significations within the contents of its frame, yet the context of its frame in terms of the home mode of production and exhibition necessitates an understanding of its unique sets of contextual codes which influence the creating and viewing of the images. Filmmaker and scholar Michelle Citron suggests that home movies maintain a frame of fiction despite being images of ‘real’ people (1999, 54), with the purposes of such fictions to create family narratives that clean up trauma and represent the family as “tidy” (50). In turn, these tidy images come to represent what “good” memory appears to be (7) because there is a matter of selection involved in what is ultimately committed to a medium of home movie (19). Notably, Citron’s main argument is centered around the active role of the home movie in the creation of represented memories through the frame of fiction offered by the “good” or wholesome aesthetic that the home movie stands to represent. Throughout the examination of her own family’s home movies, she reveals a history of abuse, reading against the representations of familial cohesion as presented in the home movies of her childhood, finding discourses of dominance in her father’s control of the home movie camera and his choices in framing the family through it. Citron’s reading of her own home movies not only suggests an interpretation following along similar notions of the home movie as process in her mediation of represented activity versus reality, but also shows how the understanding of home movies is inherently tied to the presented aesthetics and memories associated with the recorded events.

The home movie carries with it aesthetic codes which signify it as a ‘home movie’ when compared to that of a professional film. Such codes, as discussed in the chapter prior, began in the differentiations of technological formats and economic markets, and extended to the creation

of ideal images of familialism. Beyond aesthetics, the creation of memory, Richard Chalfen finds, is one of the central purposes of the home movie (1998). Elements of aesthetics and memory are inherently tied together in the creation of meaning for participants involved in producing and viewing home movies, and therefore, are involved in the experience that comprises the process of the home movie. Throughout the following sections of this chapter, the role of aesthetics and memory will be examined in relation to the experience of the home movie. First, aesthetics will be explored in terms of materiality and discussed in relation to aesthetic convention and conditioning according to theorist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's notion of 'popular aesthetics' will be applied as it relates to the aesthetic codes of home movies distinguished by Richard Chalfen in his ethnographic study. Secondly, the relation of memory and image will be explored, centered primarily around the notion of the 'recollection-image' as described by philosopher and film scholar Gilles Deleuze. Finally, memory acts specific to the home movie according to theorist Roger Odin will be discussed in determining how aesthetics and memory interact in the role of experiencing the moving image in the home mode.

Aesthetic conditioning

Regardless of what material home movies are recorded on, there are aesthetic qualities unique to each particular media format. Whether the moving images be captured on 16mm, Super 8, Beta, miniDV, or solid-state, the content contained on the media is subject to the effects of time. The longevity of a particular format may vary, but regardless of whether or not the home movie is physically decomposing on film or digitally degrading on video, the materiality of moving images is subject to time, similar to participants' interactions with the images and

their respective memories. With aging home movie technologies comes aging signifiers of time as home movies are captured on changing technologies; particular formats may signify particular times in a family history. As such, the materiality of a home movie cannot be ignored in understanding its function because its material is a part of what comprises its aesthetic qualities. Material, according to visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards and communications scholar Janice Hart, carries with it marks of history, which encompass many facets of the material, including its “intention, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding, and recycling” (2004, 1), all of which have an impact on how they are to be understood, especially in consideration of images as materials. Accordingly, Edwards and Hart suggest that photographic materials “have inextricably linked meanings” as images and objects in themselves (2). It is in their material qualities in addition to the content of the images that meaning may be found, influencing how viewers consume and interact with such materials. Expressing similar notions of materiality as Edwards and Hart, Mieke Bal notes that materiality “has a certain influence on meaning: [it ‘constrains’] the meaning that...is possible to construct’, even if this does not guarantee that a ‘right’ meaning can be found” (2003b, 15). While the material of an image may not necessarily direct a viewer to create a single ‘right’ meaning, Bal suggests that material may *guide* the construction of meaning. An aged home movie shot on Super 8 may signify or guide a different making of meaning than that of a more recently shot home movie recorded on high definition video. The materials carry with them signifiers of time in a means that conditions the viewer to assume a certain position in relation to the movie being viewed, thus influencing how the moving images are to be related to and interacted with. Materiality takes part in the conditioning of aesthetic norms upon which home movies are understood.

Notions of aesthetic conditioning are found in Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the 'popular aesthetic'. Throughout his research, Bourdieu finds that there are systems of rules which act in governing how images are interpreted. Discussing this in regard to the photographic image, he states, "...photography is a conventional system which expresses space in terms of the laws of perspective...and volumes and colors" (1990, 73-74), relaying the basic aesthetic qualities of an image. Regarding the reading of such conventions, Bourdieu notes, "...subjects in all social milieux always resort to certain systems of reading" (75), which he asserts to an existence of a "language of every aesthetic" (76). In developing a language by which to read an aesthetic, Bourdieu proposes that there is a level of conditioning according to disposition on the part of the viewer. Such conditioning comes through exposure to different types of images and the social uses of these images, not unlike learning a verbal language. He suggests that the appearance of 'the very reality of things' is "only ever conveyed through socially conditioned forms of perception" (77), in which there is a syntax developed via a particular medium's social uses. Considering this in terms of the home movie, a syntax of viewing may be developed through its purposes as a function of the home mode. As discussed in the previous chapter, perception becomes understood through the contextual knowledge of the home movie, yet the very syntax of the home mode may also influence how this contextual knowledge can be used in viewing.

Continuing to develop his notion of the popular aesthetic, Bourdieu finds that images allow for a "transfiguration" of the photographed object or subject which allows for a recognition of creation of the image (1990, 78). In this transfiguration, the image may fulfill "aesthetic expectations" (79). Regarding expectations, it is a popular aesthetic that fulfills an expectation because it follows a set of aesthetic norms which a viewer may be familiar with. For example, a

black and white image may signify a different expectation than that of a color image when considering a widely distributed professional film. A popular aesthetic may take an appearance of a particular color or use a particular grain of film to construct the feel of a desired time or space that is typically represented by a distinctive aesthetic, such as Steven Soderbergh's use of period camera equipment and black and white film stock with his 2006 feature *The Good German*, a thriller set in the 1940s in the tradition of similar films produced in the 1940s, including *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) and *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941). Soderbergh employs this aesthetic not only through choice of film stock, but also through the movement of the camera, use of sound, and period mise-en-scène, all emulating respective aspects of production from major studio films of the 1940s in the widely disseminated and perpetuated style of Classical Hollywood cinema. The aesthetic of *The Good German* extends into its advertising, as well, with poster and print campaigns styled in the appearance of those of *Casablanca*. Such advertising and use of film aesthetics creates expectations from which the film may be interpreted in dialogue with similar films of the 1940s and the positing of this style in a different time period. Through its aesthetics, the film is situated within a particular social expectation.

Regarding social functions of aesthetics, Bourdieu explains that a popular aesthetic “expressed in photographs and in the judgements passed on photographs follows on logically from the social functions conferred upon photography, and from the fact that it is always given a social function” (80). Functions of aesthetics, accordingly, are “necessarily pluralistic and conditional” (86), meaning that they may be understood in different ways with different purposes, yet may still follow the aforementioned common logic of meaning being conferred.

Ultimately, Bourdieu finds the popular aesthetic to be “the aesthetic of communication with others and communication with the world” (94). Working from a widely understood and consumed conception of aesthetic norms, a popular aesthetic offers a means by which to communicate through images. Such an understanding of aesthetic norms derives from a disposition situated in an exposure to images. Similar to his concept of an aesthetic syntax, Bourdieu finds disposition to be a factor in the development of recognizing the functions of popular aesthetics. Deciphering aesthetic taste, he considers aesthetics to be a form of cultural construction in which the consumption of art and culture are predisposed to fulfill the social function of legitimizing social difference (1984, 7). Viewing and interpreting images is decoded through operations learned via a cultural code (3), and the cultural code is learned through dispositions gained from such factors including level of education, social origin, and social class (13-14), all of which denote a level of ‘instruction’ upon which interpretation may be understood. Bourdieu collects data regarding the preferences of various ‘groups’ of people based upon levels of education and class, concluding that delineations of preferred art are based upon social disposition, aligning poetry with the more educated and serial novels with the ‘mass audience’ (1993, 49). Such a difference in preference, he notes, is a part of the establishment of the “specific aesthetic disposition (or attitude)” that allows for the “specificity of aesthetic judgement” in which viewers give value and meaning to works of cultural production (258). Although Bourdieu posits this notion of judgement and taste in terms of ‘levels’ of artistic merit, the specificity of judgement and disposition informs notions of how viewers experience and relate to images. Through certain aesthetic dispositions, viewers become familiar with specific styles and learn to interpret different aesthetics in appropriately unique, particular ways, allowing

for a recognition of distinctive sets of aesthetic norms. In considering the home movie as a particular aesthetic style, or its own form of ‘popular aesthetic’, it becomes difficult to state *the* home movie aesthetic rather than *a* home movie aesthetic because a home movie may take many different forms. This is not to say, however, that a collection of home movies cannot carry with it certain sets of aesthetic norms of expectations and social functions recognizable through an aesthetic disposition.

Throughout his ethnographic study of the social practices surrounding what he came to describe as the ‘home mode’, Richard Chalfen explores many different characteristics of home mode imagery. His ten-year study examined approximately two-hundred collections of personal imagery—including photographs and home movies—the majority of which belonged to white middle class Americans in the northeastern area of the United States, with most imagery being produced between the years 1940 and 1980 (1987, 2). In viewing the home movie collections of these families, Chalfen finds patterns not only in the social practices of the home mode, as discussed in the chapter prior, but also finds frequent stylistic similarities amongst the numerous movies. He refers to these styles as “code characteristics” of the home movie, and finds the codes appearing in the highest frequencies to be:

- 1) Great amount of camera movement, most often panning to follow action and fit as much into the frame as possible.
- 2) Zoom technique.
- 3) Majority of shots taken at long or medium distance, close-ups rare.
- 4) More footage was poorly exposed in older home movies than in the more recent.
- 5) Length of shots varied greatly.
- 6) Shots had little visual continuity apart from being taken in the same place, about the same subject, at nearly the same time, or were all shot by the same person.
- 7) One piece of media may contain shots from several different shooting sessions.

8) Jumps in shots occurred regularly (65-66).

Additionally, Chalfen finds high frequencies in patterns of the contents of what is captured and viewed through the home movie:

- 1) People, especially children, walking toward the camera.
- 2) Staring into the camera, similar to still portraits.
- 3) People will pose, or “project” themselves as the camera watches them.
- 4) Great amount of waving at the camera (67).

What should be added to these lists of aesthetic codes and patterns of content are the types of stocks or media that the home movies are produced and viewed on. As discussed through the work of Patricia Zimmermann, 35mm stocks primarily remained a ‘professional’ medium while 16mm and eventually 8mm stocks became standardized amateur media. Similarly, consumer camcorders offer a quality of video apart from that of professional video cameras—although the gap in video resolutions continues to narrow as more affordable digital technologies reach the consumer market. Through the aesthetic codes, behaviors, and amateur types of media, moving images in the home mode take on traits that may be considered together to form a generalized type of ‘home movie aesthetic’. Although each of these codes or behaviors may not be apparent in every single home movie produced, and nor is every home movie going to be shot on one particular media format, what is apparent through Chalfen’s research is the suggestion that home movies do develop distinctive characteristics. Such characteristics, to a certain extent, are emulated by professional filmmakers in order to reach the intimacy of the home mode. Filmmaker Michel Gondry, in his feature *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), utilizes such tropes of the home movie in a scene showing the protagonist as a child. He employs a grainy film stock with subdued color and sporadic motion of the camera, tracking the child in

frame from a medium-long distance. Additionally, jump cuts are made, emulating the patterns of visual discontinuity typically seen in home movies. In a film about the erasure of memory, this scene is meant to represent the protagonist's past memory, suggesting not only a tie between home movies and memories, but also the popularization of the aesthetic codes of home movies.

Through Chalfen's findings of common patterns and stylistic codes there are particular aesthetics attributed to the home movie, creating conventional, or popular, aesthetics that are distinctive specifically to movies produced in the home mode. As such, viewing and consuming movies in the home mode is a form of exposure to such characteristics, acting as a means of cultivating an aesthetic disposition in Bourdieu's terms, in which participants in the home mode maintain a concept of what the home mode looks like by actively participating in it. Through active participation, the social functions of the aesthetics of the home movie seek to perpetuate what the home mode is and how it appears. Although particular distinctive qualities will be unique to the particular families and groups participating in the home mode—especially patterns of content since the content will be comprised of images of the participants in their surroundings—the development of a distinctive set of qualities through home mode production is what will be later viewed and interpreted by participants in home mode exhibition. The means of 'revisiting' the past will never actualize the past moment, but instead, will signify the past moment through the mediation of a material with particular aesthetic qualities. In mediating experience, the aesthetics of the home movie engage with how the images are to be read through a conditional understanding that signifies a moving image with the social functions and expectations of the home mode. By viewing and understanding the aesthetic conventions of the home movie, the experience of the home movie is negotiated because there is no 'pure' means of reproduction of

past actuality or reality; rather, once-actual-events are represented through the filter of a set of aesthetics, thus informing the process of the home movie as it continues to be viewed, and furthermore, as it is remembered. The role of memory in organizing one's perception and interpretation of a home movie takes on significance in the reading of experience. But before examining the role of memory in terms of the home movie and its interaction with home mode aesthetics, the following section will outline the relationship between memory and moving images according to Gilles Deleuze with his concept of the 'recollection-image'.

Memory / recollection

Media scholar José van Dijck writes extensively about the role of media in constructing memory, particularly in the digital age. She finds that memories do not remain static, but are mediated and triggered through the use of a 'memory object', which acts as "an index to lived experience" (2004, 359). Memory objects, such as the material object of a home movie, activate memories through the interactions between human agency and material (359). Van Dijck explains, "Memories are effectively rewritten each time they are activated: instead of recalling a memory that has been "stored" some time ago, the brain is forging it all over again in a new associative context" (354). This, accordingly, signals a negotiation between a memory of the past with the forging of the present. In doing so, van Dijck finds, "Memory can be creative in reconstructing the past, just as imagination can be reconstructive in memorizing the present" (357). In turn, memory is constantly in flux, subject to the materials which trigger it and the relationships involved in reconstructing it. In detailing formations of memory, van Dijck draws upon the concept of the 'recollection-image', which she describes "[not as] re-livings of

past experiences; rather, they are actions of the contemporary brain through which past sensations are evoked and filtered” (352). The idea of filtering through the recollection-image is important in finding the role of memory in relation to moving images. Gilles Deleuze describes the recollection-image in more detail as it relates to his concepts of the ‘movement-image’ and ‘time-image’.

Constructions of memory through the recollection-image equate memory with a series of actions and sensations, suggesting a similar notion of a series of images in the vein of the concept of the movement-image as related to cinema. In creating a movement-image, Deleuze suggests, cutting determines the shot, and the shot determines movement as it is established within a closed system (1986, 18). A closed system may be the diegesis of a film or a particular memory, and movement-images come from series of moments placed in sequences that add up to a greater whole. Deleuze finds that the movement-image is composed of mobile sections of duration that have the ability to express the changing of the whole (11), suggesting that individual moments are capable of changing how the larger event is perceived and understood. Every image acts upon and reacts to other images (58), creating a constant change in interpretation as more images are factored into the equation, ultimately reorganizing time and space for the viewer. Deleuze states, “Perception is master of space in the exact measure in which action is master of time” (65). The time-image, thus, is the active complement to the movement-image. While the movement-image is constructed through perceptions of mobile durations, the time-image is created through the actions of these durations, in which action may take the form of recollection and memory.

In terms of memory, Deleuze discusses the recollection-image and how the evocation of such an image never represents a “pure past” (1989, 106). The recollection-image is an attempt to evoke a past, but results in producing an actual present (109), suggesting that the past is always subject to the perspective of the present. ‘Pure recollection’, for Deleuze, is merely “virtual”, while the recollection-image is ‘actual’ in relation to the present, derived from the pure recollection (123). He explains, “Recollection...is part of the line of subjectivity [in which] recollections do not have to be preserved anywhere other than “in” duration. *Recollection therefore is...in itself*” (1988, 54). In other words, recollection is but a fleeting action in time, one that only exists “in itself” in a particular time. The past, therefore, is “caught between two presents: the old present that it once was and the actual present in relation to which it is now past” (58). In terms of the relationship between memory and moving images, the recollection-image suggests a mediation of times, in which the recollections that produce memory are affected by the moving images which recall past experiences. Existing “in itself”, the recollection-image becomes a means to reach the next recollection-image and compile together a perceived form of memory which enacts a remembered experience. Deleuze states, “We do not move from the present to the past, from perception to recollection, but from the past to the present, from recollection to perception” (63). The recollection-image is a means to a perception, an understanding, and an experience mediated between self and signifier. What that experience becomes is a negotiation of memory, perception, and object, in which Deleuze notes, “Recollection-images restore the distinctions of the past in the present—at least those that are useful” (70). What is useful and what is not useful distinguishes what is recalled and what is not. As Deleuze suggests, memory is restored through “useful” recollections, in which “useful” is

equated with meaningful or salient moments or times, important to the action of the recollection-image. In the Deleuzian model of memory, the recollection-image acts as “immediate evidence” (Rodowick 1997, 22) which provides a mapping through the process of different moments in time in relation to images drawn from perception (88). Memory is a perception achieved through the recollection-image, which is the mediating image between the viewer and the signifying material activating the image. Considering this in terms of the home movie, memory becomes tied to the relationship between moving image and contextual knowledge in the home mode.

Remembering the home movie

Discussing the role of memory construction through the home movie, theorist Roger Odin states, “The modalities of textual construction change in relation to context. ...affect and the interaction during production and reception must be analyzed” (2008, 255). He continues by describing the function of the home movie to act “as [an] *index* inviting the family to *return to a past already lived*. ...[The home movie] invites us to use a double process of *remembering*” (259). Although Odin’s conception of memory differs from that of Deleuze’s, the goal here is to place the two in dialogue in regard to the home movie rather than conflate both; intersections may be found in their theories regarding experience. While Deleuze writes of memory and the recollection-image in generalized terms, Odin positions memory specifically in regard to the home movie and what he describes as two modes of remembering: ‘collective remembering’ and ‘individual remembering’, which consist of differing contextual factors in the

home mode of exhibition that alter the approach to the construction of memory. Describing collective remembering, Odin states:

“Unlike fictional film screenings, interaction infuses the projection of a family film. Each family member reconstitutes a common past. A viewer might intervene to stop the screening (behavior prohibited while watching a fictional film) to develop the memory of an important scene. The story is certainly triggered by the screen, but it does not necessarily relate to the images. Unlike traditional cinematographic projection, to watch a home movie is to be involved in a “performance”... To watch a home movie with the family is to collaborate in the reconstruction of a “mythical” family history. Remembering builds toward *celebration*” (259-260).

On the other hand, individual remembering operates in parallel; Odin explains:

“The story of the individual parallels the collective story. Boris Eikenbaum proposed the notion of “interior language”: “The process of interior discourse resides in the mind of the spectator”. This interior language can be understood...in the Subject. With the home movie, the context resides in the experience of the Subject. Consequently, home movies seem boring for those outside the family because outsiders lack the contextual frame that positions the disjointed images. ...Contrary to the generally euphoric collective experience, this process of returning to the self often conjures painful memories” (260).

Odin suggests that reading a home movie is to “*use*” it for something beyond its own function (261). Interior discourses, whether negotiated alone while viewing or amongst the performances of others, contribute to the ways in which the home movie is experienced. The home movie is used to create particular emotional connections or to structure relative narratives by means of remembering. Similar to how Deleuze finds importance in recollection-images that are particularly “useful” to the construction of memory, Odin’s suggestions of these different modes of interaction through the exhibition of the home movie structure the mediated memory through

the triggering of images and the exhibition practices that complement these images. Experience is negotiated by the perceived memory and understanding constructed by participants involved in the home mode of exhibition along with the knowledge of their social relationships to the participants originally involved in the home mode of production. Sharing experience and memory creates a familial narrative from which experience may be mediated further. Since such experience is activated through images, the resulting construction of memory and narrative is also subject to the aesthetics of the home movie in view.

The construction of an experience through the construction of memory is also a construction of an aesthetic. Distinctive aesthetic qualities of the home movie act as a filter by which memories are triggered and, therefore, how experiences are perceptually organized. By enacting a mode of memory activated through a moving image in the home mode, the memory is inherently tied to the aesthetic of the home movie because the recollection-image is, itself, implicated in the materiality of the moving image from which it is triggered and by which it mediates. The experience of the home movie is necessarily implicated in not only the maintaining of contextual knowledge surrounding its production and exhibition, but also in the ways these contexts create a relationship to the participants of the home mode. By means of aesthetic conditioning, participants maintain expected norms from which the experience of the home movie is drawn. In turn, this conditioning filters the experience of remembering in the relationship between moving image and viewer. As a process, the aesthetics and constructed memories associated with the home movie become a part of the making of meaning and understanding of the social relationships developed through the home mode. Aesthetic conditioning assumes a narrow proximity between participants as it is a learned instruction

guiding the activity of the home movie through active participation, thus aiding in the construction of experience. Similarly, memory exists in an evolving mediation between social relationships and represented images as it changes throughout time by means of the negotiated and re-negotiated understandings of the home movie.

Conclusion

In developing a theoretical framework with which to approach the reading of a home movie, the ideal, appropriate reading must consider the contextual factors surrounding the home movie. By its very nature, the home movie exists within a set of social practices which carry with them particular intentions and purposes that inform the meanings and interpretations which stem from the images. Developing out of a history that encoded the intentions of amateur cinema and home moviemaking apart from those of the professional film, the home movie necessitates an approach of reading different from the textual analysis of a professional film. A process, as a point of experience continually subject to a narrow proximity predisposed by a subjective set of relationships, appropriately fits the home movie as it is produced and exhibited in the home mode because the home movie, in itself, is a social activity which seeks to develop social relationships. In production, participants create a representative image of themselves which will be viewed at a later time in the home mode of exhibition. At this point, the experience of the home movie becomes negotiated by the contextual knowledge of the original production and participants, the context of the mode of exhibition and the participants involved, and the mediation of the moving images by qualities of aesthetics and memory. Experiencing a home movie becomes a matter of organizing the perception of images, in which the meaning drawn from the home movie is subject to the interaction between the viewing participant and the images being viewed, negotiating how contextual knowledge is remembered. As a process, the

home movie becomes a complex object of study that requires more than simply reading the content of its images; rather, the home movie must be read beginning at its point of conception through to its realization in experience in order to properly understand it in its full process because the home movie signifies and re-signifies the relationships it mediates through time. Although including all of this may seem theoretically impossible when considering the implementation of this approach, the necessitated questions that arise in conducting complex research can actually be quite simple.

Robbins Barstow has been making amateur films and home movies since acquiring his first 16mm camera in the 1930s. Throughout the following decades, he has continued to be an active home moviemaker, cleverly blending his personal humor with his family's events and travels. Now approaching age ninety, Barstow travels to home movie and orphan film conferences, screening many of his films and advocating for greater attention to the importance of cinema produced and exhibited in the home mode. As of 2008, many of his home movies have been preserved by the Library of Congress, collected together as the "Robbins Barstow 20th Century Home Movie Collection". Of the films donated to the Library of Congress, one of his family's vacation movies provides a breadth of information which allows for an ideal approach to the film as process: his 1956 movie titled *Disneyland Dream*.

Living in the town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, Barstow and his family won a nationwide contest for a family vacation to Disneyland in Anaheim, California in 1956. Robbins, the father of the family, recorded the family's vacation in a creative manner, tracking the family's travels over the course of 30 minutes of film, beginning at home with the notice that they won the contest, then documenting their flight, and of course, the attractions of Disneyland.

What is unique about Barstow's film is its existence and use following the trip in 1956. Since its original recording, Barstow has regularly shown the film to family and friends along with his own personal narration, much as he does with his other films. In the late 1980s, Barstow transferred all of his home movies from film to video. In 1995, he recorded a narration track to the video transfer of *Disneyland Dream*, and the film was named to the National Film Registry in 2008. As of 2010, the film has been packaged on DVD and is available for purchase, with an included making-of special feature. Furthermore, the film, with its narration, may be freely viewed by anyone with access to a computer and internet connection since Barstow has made this and many of his other films available for download on the Internet Archive. Apart from reading the images of the film itself, the context becomes equally important in reading its process throughout the years.

Although this film is a very unique case since it has gained much attention and reached far beyond the realm of the private home, questions that arise in approaching a reading of the film are still relevant to reading the film as process. Basic questions to begin with include: How did the film begin? In what locations was it shot? For what purposes was the film made? Who is involved in the production? What are the participants' relationships to each other? How did Barstow frame his family members? Did his family members pose for the camera? How does this inform a viewer's understanding of the film? These questions may be asked of the production of any home movie, yet the answers unique to each particular movie will greatly alter how one constructs an interpretation. Questions that arise in exhibition become more involved: To whom is this film shown? In what setting? What is the narration about? Do participants other than Barstow narrate? Is the narration meant to guide the viewing? What emotions are

triggered by these screenings? Where the process of this film differs from most other home movies is in its re-purposing and wider dissemination: How does the transfer from film to video affect the mode of exhibition? Does the change of medium result in a change of aesthetic? Has the video aged more or less compared to the original film? As the film moves from the private to public sphere, what changes take place in the mode of exhibition? Are new intentions attached in this change? How does this change negotiate the viewing experience which may inform recollection? Does its position in the National Film Registry alter the approach to viewing the image? As with any object of research, some will possess information that is more ideal than others and some are more well-documented than others. In the case of *Disneyland Dream*—thanks to its creator—the film has a very well-documented history which may be drawn upon in reading the home movie as process.

Most home movies, however, will not have the benefit of being so well maintained throughout the years, nor accompanied by such extensive accolades and public attention. What is important in reading a home movie as process is to read it on its own terms and be explicit about such terms. A home movie may be read in dialogue with other home movies in a family's collection if a collection is available. But regardless, a home movie must be contextualized in a manner unique to its production and exhibition, taking into consideration its aesthetic qualities (including materiality) and theorizing how it may mediate the construction of memory. In reading a home movie throughout a process, mediations could become dangerously amorphous projections of the scholar rather than thoughtful considerations of the context in question. Mediations should be marked by important shifts or events in the life of the home movie, such as the transfer to video or entrance into the public sphere of *Disneyland Dream*. This is not to say

that mediations cannot be examined on a much narrower, closer level of research, but rather, that defining points of mediation must be appropriate to the particular home movie. In constructing points of experience, outlining the contextual terms of the home movie are important actions on the part of the researcher. Reading a home movie requires a balance between the exploration of historical context and theoretical image, in which major points of interest may be found in examining patterns of the context and images in question. With that said, the framework proposed in this thesis necessitates further development by implementing it in future directions in research.

One major concern in the research of home movies is the availability and accessibility of resources. With the growth of film archives, specifically those housing or devoted to home movies, the problem then becomes the control over research. Research may, out of necessity, be guided by what is available in these archives. Or, more ideally, research questions can be generated in response to the archival collections being preserved. Turning to the Library of Congress, the National Film Registry ranks highly in terms of canonizing ‘important’ pieces of cultural production in the United States, and the film collections of the Library maintain particular notions of what this importance is. The collection of Robbins Barstow’s films is not the only collection of home movies being preserved, but is one amongst others, ranging from movies of family travels and events such as Barstow’s, to personal narratives such as *Think of Me First as a Person* (1960s/1970s/2006), a family’s chronicle of their son with down syndrome; to the Topaz collection of home movie footage, taken at Japanese American Internment Camps at the Topaz War Relocation Authority Center in the years 1943-1945. While the Library’s home movie collections remain more of a niche in comparison to those of the professional feature

films, what is of interest is the representative image of the nation 'at home' which the Library is constructing through these particular selections of home movie preservations. One future direction in research would be to examine how these home movies construct a representative image of familialism in the United States, examining the original contexts of the films and the effects of the re-purposing of these materials, constructing meaning within a frame of representative nationality. Similar questions may be asked of other national, regional, or private archives in the United States or other countries around the world. Are home movies preserved simply because they act as cultural documents, or are they being held with specific purposes in mind? How do these collections speak to each other and change the meanings of each other through such archival positions? Regardless of what the particular collections are, the importance will be in appropriately approaching the home movies as of form of process which takes into consideration both the images, themselves, and the unique contextual factors surrounding, informing, and influencing the interpretations which follow.

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